

Jesus Changes Everything

Christian Theology for Christian Life (II)

Christian Assembly Foursquare Church — Sundays 11:15 a.m., 2415 Colorado

- 5/30 It Didn't Start With Jesus: The Setting of Our Salvation**
Yancey 1, 3; Isaiah 2:1-4, Luke 1, Luke 2:21-52
- 6/6 God With Us?! The Meaning of Incarnation**
Yancey 2; Luke 2:1-20, John 1:1-18, Romans 5:12-21
- 6/13 NO CLASS!**
- 6/20 Loving Jesus the Wrong Way: Four Common Mistakes and How They Hurt Us**
1 Corinthians 15, Hebrews 2:5-18, 4:14-16
- 6/27 God's Anointed: Jesus' New Relationship with the Holy Spirit, and Ours**
Yancey 4, 9; Matthew 3, Mark 1:1-11, Luke 3:1-22, John 1:19-51, Romans 6
- 7/11 Signs and Wonders: Jesus' Ministry and Its Message**
I. Jesus Changes Prophethood
Yancey 6; Luke 4:14-22, Acts 2:14-21, Acts 3:17-4:4
- 7/18 II. Jesus Changes Priesthood**
Yancey 7; Hebrews 4:14-5:10, 7:1-8:7 (for background, Psalm 110 and Genesis 14)
- 7/25 III. Jesus Changes Kingship**
Yancey 8; John 12:12-16, 18:33-19:22, Revelation 22:1-5
- 8/1 From Jesus to Scripture: How Christ Instituted the Bible**
Matthew 5:17-48
- 8/8 To Follow Him Is to Know Him: Why "Objectivity" Is a Bad Idea**
Yancey 5; Luke 9:28-36
- 8/15 Can God Really Suffer? The Powerful Weakness of the Cross**
Yancey 10; Mark 14:32-36, 15:33-39 (compare Luke 22:39-46, 23:26-46)
- 8/22 Easter Changes Everything**
Yancey 11; 1 Cor. 15, Matthew 28:1-15, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-49, John 20:1-21:23
- 8/29 After the Ascension: Do We Worship a Historical Jesus?**
Yancey 12, 14; Acts 1:1-11
- 9/5 "I'll Be Back": Jesus' Answer to the Problem of Evil**
Yancey 13; Matthew 24:25-46, 1 Peter 3:8-5:11, Revelation 20:4-15

Jesus Changes Everything

It Didn't Start With Jesus: The Setting of Our Salvation after May 30

Our "textbook" is Philip Yancey's *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). You can find it at regular chain bookstores, Christian bookstores, and seminary bookstores. For this assignment, **read chapters 1 and 3.**

Read Isaiah 2:1-4, concerning Isaiah's vision for Israel's significance in world history through its Messiah; and Luke 1:5-56 and 2:21-52, concerning the fulfillment of that vision in Jesus' coming.

Questions to ponder:

1. Why does it matter that Jesus Christ is a Jew?
2. God's attitudes in the Old Testament are often *contrasted* with God's attitudes in the New Testament. But in what ways are the two *alike*?
3. How does our Jewish inheritance enrich the Church? How does it enrich worship at C.A.? How does it enrich our personal lives as Christians?
4. How does anti-Semitism distort God, the Christian faith, and the Christian life?

And for extra fun:

Compare Mary's song (often called the Magnificat) in Luke 1:46-55 to Hannah's song, in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Why would Mary see Hannah as a precursor to herself? How does familiarity with the Old Testament help us understand the New Testament better? How does familiarity with the New Testament help us understand the *Old* Testament better?

Jesus Changes Everything

God With Us?! The Meaning of Incarnation

June 6

Read Yancey chapter 2; John 1:1-18, concerning the incarnation of the Word; and Romans 5:12-21, an argument using the humanity of Jesus to understand the salvation he accomplished.

1. Next, pick one or two stories about Jesus from anywhere in the Gospels, and meditate on how a knowledge of Jesus' "divine humanity" helps you understand the passage. In particular, ask how a deeper appreciation of *both* Jesus as God the Son, and Jesus as a fully human being, affects the way you read the passage.

The choice of stories is entirely yours. You may wish to pick one that has puzzled you up until now. If no particular story comes to mind, I suggest Luke 4:1-13, about Jesus' time of temptation in the wilderness; Matthew 14:22-33, about Jesus and Peter walking on water; John 11:17-44, about the resuscitation of Lazarus just before Jesus' own crucifixion; Mark 14:32-42, in the Garden of Gethsemane; Matthew 27:45-50, on Jesus' death; or Luke 24:13-43 or John 21:4-14, recounting two of Jesus' appearances to his disciples after his resurrection.

2. Popular advice for teenagers is to have them ask, "What would Jesus do?" I've heard arguments both for and against this kind of approach; so let's test it using the concept of incarnation. Pick a moral question your family, circle of friends, or church has faced. How does asking "What would Jesus do?" help clarify your thinking? In particular, how does this question depend on Jesus' full humanity *and* full divinity for it to help you?

We're likely to discuss these questions briefly next week, so feel free to speak up!

Jesus Changes Everything

Loving Jesus the Wrong Way: Common Mistakes and How They Hurt Us June 20

Read 1 John 4:1-6, a warning to John's congregations to beware of error, yet without being intimidated by it. Notice the reference to confession that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." It's possible that this text refers to some early group of disciples who denied Jesus' full humanity. You also may want to read texts like 1 Corinthians 15, Hebrews 2:5-18, Hebrews 4:14-16 for more material on the consequences of incarnation.

1. Scrutinize your personal faith (and faith you've inherited from others — parents, churches, and wider culture) in the light of the Scriptures and the Church's traditional confession of Jesus as God with us. In other words, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God." How has your belief in Jesus compromised his full divinity, full humanity, and/or their unity in him? How does a deeper appreciation of incarnation change the way you:

... worship?

... work?

... pray?

... reach out to others?

... treat those with different beliefs?

... treat God's creation?

... regard suffering and death?

This obviously isn't a quick assignment. In fact, it's one that lasts at least a lifetime.

Jesus Changes Everything

God's Anointed: Jesus' Relationship with the Holy Spirit, and Ours June 27

Read the texts we concentrated on this week, especially Luke 3:1-4:30. But you might also like to compare it to Matthew 3:1-4:17, Mark 1:1-15, and John 1:24-34.

How does seeing Jesus as God's *anointed* change your perception of him?

Read Romans 6, where Paul makes a very close connection between the baptism of Christians and the lives we are to lead afterward. What do the meaning of Jesus' baptism, and its resemblance to ours, tell us about the effects of baptism for us, Jesus' disciples? In other words, let's connect baptism, the Holy Spirit's role in your life, and your behavior as a Christian.

How does seeing the connection between Jesus and the Holy Spirit clarify the Holy Spirit's role in your own life as a Christian?

What does it say about the incarnate Son of God, that his ministry would *need* empowering by the Holy Spirit and affirmation by the Father?

What does it say about the work *you* do for God?

Jesus Changes Everything

Signs and Wonders: Jesus' Ministry and Its Message

I. Jesus Changes Prophethood

July 4 (11)

Read one of the Old Testament prophets — Joel is a good example (and in only four chapters!), but of course you can pick any one you like.

Notice the themes:

1:1-2:17: Reading the “signs of the times” (a locust plague in Judah) as God's judgment

2:18-32: Assurance of Judah's salvation in the *coming* day of judgment

3:1-21: Warning about Judgment Day's damnation and deliverance

How does this book improve your understanding of what a prophet is and does?

How does it change your understanding of the kind of prophet Jesus is?

(Hint: Compare Joel to Mark 13.)

How does it help you understand the “Kingdom of God” whose arrival Jesus is announcing?

Now turn it around: How does Jesus' prophethood change your understanding of Old Testament prophethood?

How does it change your understanding of *your own* prophethood?

(Hint: Compare Joel and Mark 13 to Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:14-41, or to Stephen's ministry and its result, in Acts 6:8-8:2 (especially 7:51-8:2).)

Jesus Changes Everything

Signs and Wonders: Jesus' Ministry and Its Message

II. Jesus Changes Priesthood

July 18

Read:

Yancey, chapter 7.

Old Testament background: *Genesis 14. Numbers 8:5-22. Psalm 110. Isaiah 61 [6].*

New Testament: *Hebrews 4:14-5:10, 7:1-8:7. Matthew 16:19. 1 Peter 2:4-10.*

How does the office of the priesthood in ancient Israel foreshadow or prefigure Jesus' ministry?

How does Jesus' ministry as "priest" help make the Old Testament priesthood more understandable?

How does Jesus' priesthood help you understand your own priesthood?

How have other believers done God's work in your life by forgiving you, or by not forgiving you?

How should you use your "power of the keys?" When and how should you forgive, and when and how should you *not* forgive?

Jesus Changes Everything

Signs and Wonders: Jesus' Ministry and Its Message

III. Jesus Changes Kingship

July 25

Read:

Yancey, chapter 8.

Old Testament background: *Psalm 146, 2, and 110.*

And for extra jewels in your crown, Daniel 2.

New Testament: *Luke 11:2-4, John 12:12-16, 18:33-19:22, Revelation 22:1-5.*

What do Israel's ancient kings (especially David) tell us about what kind of king Jesus is?

What does Jesus' kingship tell us about the ancient kings of Israel? In other words, now that Jesus has come, what can we say was *their* role in God's plan?

How does your life reflect (or not reflect) the fact that you are a subject of the Kingdom of God?

What relationship does the Kingdom of God have with, say, the "kingdom" of the United States? In other words, what does being Jesus' subjects have to say about our own civil and public lives? (Examples: Whether and how we vote; obey particular laws; pledge allegiance; use the legal system; serve in the armed forces; pay taxes; treat non-citizens and even "enemies of the state"; work to change public policy; and so on. This is another one of those questions you can and should spend your life answering.)

How does your life in the Church and in the wider world reflect (or not reflect) the fact that you reign *with* Christ the King?

Jesus Changes Everything

From Jesus to Scripture: How Christ Instituted the Bible August 1

Read: Matthew 5:17-48.

This time your assignment is a little different. Imagine a discussion with one of your friends, who is (choose one) (a) Muslim, (b) Mormon, (c) agnostic. He or she strongly believes that (a) the Quran, (b) the Book of Mormon, (c) nothing is God's Word, and puts you on the defensive a bit by challenging you: Why do you believe that *the Bible* (and only the Bible) is God's Word? You don't have time to respond immediately, but you promise to get back this week over e-mail. Think about it for a while and outline a response. Try hard to anticipate his or her objections! (If you want to e-mail it to *me* [telford.work@duke.edu] before next week, feel free; I'll try to respond with further challenges.)

You'll see how I would answer next week.

Jesus Changes Everything

To Follow Him Is to Know Him: Why “Objectivity” Is a Bad Idea August 8

Read: *Yancey 5; Luke 9:28-36.*

Remember your (a) Muslim, (b) Mormon, (c) agnostic friend? He or she appreciated your e-mail about the Bible. But then you mentioned your crazy teacher who roots the authority of Scripture in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The response is swift: But your teacher is getting “Jesus” from his own reading of the Bible. That’s circular! How can I trust that your teacher’s “Jesus” is the *real* Jesus? How do I find out who the *real* Jesus is?

Your homework this week is to outline another e-mail to your friend, this time describing how he or she should go about learning who the real Jesus is. What would you say? Again, try hard to anticipate and respond to his or her problems with your argument! (And again, if you want to e-mail it to *me* [telford.work@duke.edu] before next week, feel free; I’ll try to respond with further challenges.)

Jesus Changes Everything

Jesus Saves, But How? A Few Possibilities

August 22

Read: *John 1:11-13, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27, Hebrews 9:11-13, Colossians 2:9-15, Romans 5:1-8.*

1. God offers salvation for everyone, but different people need it and receive it in different ways. Describe your own needs for salvation (past and future) in terms of any or all of the following actions on God's part:
 1. God taking on humanity in the incarnate Jesus so that humans like yourself might become "members" of his body, the Church;
 2. His "repayment" for your sins;
 3. Jesus' victory over the powers of evil and death that held you captive;
 4. The change in your outlook brought by your awareness of who God is and what he has done for us.
2. As a Christian, you are (or would be) not only a *recipient* of God's salvation, but a *channel* of it for others. So consider a specific person in your life who especially needs God's salvation. Describe that need, again in terms of a,b,c, and d above. How might God have put you in that person's life as a means of his or her salvation?
3. Do a,b,c, and d give you an adequate description of the salvation you and the other person have, or need? What more about salvation needs to be said that these different "theories" of salvation still aren't helping you say?

Jesus Changes Everything

Can God Really Suffer? The Powerful Weakness of the Cross August 15

Read: *Mark 14:32-36, 15:1-47. Compare Luke 22:39-46, 23:26-46. Also read Yancey 10.*

Compare the anguished Jesus of Mark to the more serene, “in-control” Jesus of Luke. Don’t try to blend the two into one; just appreciate each Gospel on its own terms.

Some churches relate more to Luke’s version of Jesus’ death, while others relate more to Mark’s.

1. How does each account give you a slightly different picture of how the divine-human Jesus experienced his own death?
2. Do you find *yourself* relating more to one Gospel account than to the other? How do the two accounts feed and challenge your faith?
3. What does your favorite account seem to teach about the way God can or can’t suffer?

Extra Credit: Read one (or two or three, if you like) of the texts we will cover in class:
1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Philipians 2:5-11, Hebrews 5:1-10.

4. How does it help clarify the Gospels’ accounts of Jesus’ death? How would you explain to someone else what it teaches about God?

Jesus Changes Everything

Easter Changes Everything August 29

Read: *Yancey 11; 1 Corinthians 15 (again), Matthew 28:1-15, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-49, John 20:1-21:23*

1. “He is risen!” What does this mean? What does the Resurrection (as interpreted by the New Testament) tell you about:

1. Life after death?

2. Life *before* death?

3. The significance *of* death?

4. The proper Christian attitude towards the material world?

2. Our celebration of the Resurrection makes Easter the most joyful day in the Christian year. Furthermore, every Sunday is also a “little Easter.” Every Sunday, and especially Easter Sunday, we gather to celebrate the fact that the world changed in a fundamental way on that Sunday after Passover long ago. When you’re at church, how does its “resurrection perspective” lead you to look differently on your own life, on the lives of others, and on the world around you?

3. We changed topics for next week, so you can read Yancey 12 and 14 on your own.

Who Is This Guy? Exploring Jesus Together

4/1 After the Ascension: Is Jesus Here, or Isn't He?

Reminder: *From Jesus to Christ* will be airing on PBS *Frontline* April 6-7.

Read Acts 1:1-11; Matthew 28:16-20; John 14.

1. Pick a “spiritual gift” being practiced in the modern-day Church. (For examples, see 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 or Romans 12:4-8. By the way, Paul isn’t offering a comprehensive list; he’s just rattling off examples. That’s why the lists don’t match.) How does it symbolize and accomplish Christ’s salvation in the power of the Spirit? Or does it?
2. How do you, as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a member of his body, make him present to others?
3. How is Jesus made present to you in your daily life (for example, through worship together, the service of others, corporate and personal prayer, and “sacramental” means like Communion or the hearing or reading Scripture)?
4. “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink....” (Matt. 25:35; compare 25:42 and Hebrews 13:3) Where has Jesus been present (either through you or through others) in ways you hadn’t realized?

